

Dunning man's journey... continued

—Continued from page 1

away from everybody... I could just be by myself and go from there.”

Voc Rehab gave him much-needed support. “When I was in that real bad state for so dadgone long, just being able to talk to them and stuff (helped),” he said. “They didn’t know really how I felt or what was going on, but they just helped me a whole lot... They (were) doing everything they could.”

“We spent hours researching and assisting with (the) job search,” said Judy. They focused on his love of the outdoors. He became interested in forestry.

Through the combined efforts of his counselors and his supervisor, United States Forestry Service (USFS). District Ranger Patti Barney, Robert won a job as a

host in the Nebraska National Forest, greeting and situating campers.

Soon he moved on to his current job. He’s considering additional training to advance further in the USFS.

Judy praises his “resiliency, stick-to-it-ness, innovation, people skills, and work ethic.” She said Patti Barney continues to be a great mentor/advocate and friend to Robert. “It has been a good partnership,” said Judy.

Robert is steeled by the belief that, “It could always be worse... You just got to keep on going. There’s no sense in boo-hoo-ing... ‘cause it (won’t) help you... You got to have (that attitude). You’ve got to have it.”

Quality Employment Solutions® is an official publication provided by Vocational Rehabilitation, Nebraska Department of Education. It is published to exchange information on rehabilitation services and topics of mutual interest to Nebraskans involved in working with people with disabilities.

For a free subscription to this publication, go to:
<http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/subscribe.html>

or contact the Voc Rehab State Office toll free at 1-877-NE-REHAB (1-877-637-3422).

Please direct inquiries about **Quality Employment Solutions®** to:
Sandy Ham
402.471.0941
877.637.3422
www.vocrehab.state.ne.us

Quality Employment
Solutions®
Vocational Rehabilitation
Nebraska Department of Education
State of Nebraska
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
STATE OF
NEBRASKA



Nebraska Department of Education

Issue 56

Dunning man's journey

Forest Protection Officer is a perfect fit for Robert Fetters

“I didn’t think I’d ever do anything like this in my life,” said Recreation Tech Compliance Officer Robert “Bubba” Fetters. Robert works in the Nebraska National Forest in the Bessey Ranger District in Halsey, NE.

A bilateral above-the-knee amputee, Robert uses a wheelchair, a scooter, a pickup truck, a pay-loader, and an ATV to carry out his duties as a Forest Protection Officer. “I keep pretty busy,” he said.

Before his accident, Robert often spent Labor Day vacationing in the forest. After his accident, with help of Vocation Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab), Robert returned to the forest to take a job he now loves.

“Robert originally came to Voc Rehab after his accident in 1997. He worked with counselor Bob Garcia on career exploration and disability awareness issues,” explained Judy Dixon, Voc Rehab counselor with the Kearney field office.

“The biggest thing (Voc Rehab did) was giving me the initiative to get out there and try and find something that

I really wanted to do,” Robert said. “They helped me a lot on that...”

Robert lost his legs in accident with a self-propelled silage chopper. He used prosthetics at first and returned to his former job as a feedlot manager. He even continued with team roping.

But after much difficulty with the prosthetics, he gave up roping. After three years, he determined the feedlot job would not work out. He stopped using the prosthetics.

Robert turned again to Voc Rehab in the spring of 2002 after job loss and ongoing medical problems.

“By the time I started working with (him) he was very realistic and had worked though adjustment to his injuries and the many changes to his life,” Judy said.

He continued to work with the Voc Rehab staff to find a job. “We went on quite a few little different things but Old Stubborn here, he’d get so far and... wanted to just about give up,” said Robert.

He was getting very depressed. “But I didn’t let (anybody) know about it,” he said. “That’s why I started doing a whole lot of camping and (getting)



Robert Fetters

“They (Voc Rehab)

just helped me

a whole lot.”

—Continued on page 4

Setting New Goals

Exploring career options in Lincoln

Michelle James doesn't need a motivational speaker.

From the time she started working as a CNA, she was always trying to improve herself. In fact, just a week before an accident that caused her a mild-traumatic brain injury, Michelle received her certification to be a medication aide. Already working full-time at a doctor's office and part-time for a staffing company, she had decided to further her career so she could administer medications. Not one to complain, Michelle says that being certified, but unable to use the certification is tough.

In May of 2003, Michelle had a car accident on the interstate. After being hospitalized for five or six days, Michelle became an outpatient at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Lincoln. Michelle experiences both memory loss and post-traumatic stress disorder.

She says that emotionally the accident took its toll and what gets her through is "a lot of prayer."

Madonna Rehabilitation connected Michelle with Voc Rehab in Lincoln. Michelle wanted to work in the medical field, but was afraid that with her disability she would be unable to.

"The injury affected me in a lot of different ways," she says, "memory, emotionally... I also have post-traumatic stress disorder so the combination isn't very nice."

At Voc Rehab, Michelle works with Jenny Caruso, a woman Michelle claims is "awesome."

The two of them did a lot of career exploration, and Michelle took a series of tests to determine her interests and abilities.

"Michelle is career oriented and was very successful in the past," says Jenny. "She was unsure of how to do any clerical related occupations due to her memory loss from the accident."

(Voc Rehab gave me)

"the encouragement

that I can still work..."



Michelle James

Together, they decided that Michelle should look for part-time work and tell her employers of her disability. Michelle says that the most important thing Voc Rehab did for her was to give her "the encouragement that I can still work, that my disability isn't going to completely prevent me from normal activities."

In the meantime, John Bulin of Voc Rehab had attended a conference at the People's Health Center where he met Lisa Oliveras, the presenter. Lisa was interested in the program at Voc Rehab and decided to give it a try. "Things just fell into place," says John, "it was a nice fit."

Jenny says, "We definitely had some big decisions to make in regards to employment. However, Michelle was a huge part of the decision making and I think that is why she has been such a success."

At People's Health Center, Michelle works with medical records and performs administrative tasks including filing, copying, and faxing.

She is quick to say that her employer is very supportive. "If I have a really bad headache or if I'm not feeling well I don't work as many hours or I don't go in. I made them familiar with my situation so they were understanding."

She also really enjoys the people she works with. However, she would like to do something else and wants to go back to school for medical administration. She plans to start school in January 2005.

"I like working at the health clinic," says Michelle, "but I feel like I could do more."

"Doing more" does include buying a house and marrying her high school sweetheart of nine years, two recent accomplishments. She remarks that her family and husband have been very supportive. One can only guess what "more" will mean for this accomplished, strong woman in the years to come. □

Partnering with Pizza Hut

Omaha Woman's Menu for Success

"She's really happy there. She works hard at doing her job well," says Sally Winkelmann. She is talking about her daughter, Matty, and Matty's job at Pizza Hut. Sally also said that Matty enjoys the people she works with very much and has fun with the other employees. This contentment and stability was not easy to achieve however.

To reach her goals, Matty worked hard and utilized the services of many people. Among the agencies that she worked with was Vocational Rehabilitation in Omaha. Voc Rehab assigned Matty a counselor named Frankie Charles and the two of them worked well together.

"We just talked about different kinds of jobs I would be able to do," Matty recalled. There were a few things that they needed to consider. Matty has a condition called Turner's Syndrome. "It made it hard for me to learn," she said. Turner's is a condition that is present from birth. Many of the side effects are physical.

Matty enjoyed working with children and animals she hoped to find a career using her skills in those areas. She had a great work history and had been employed at Baker's Grocery Store for three years.

After some testing and discussion, Voc Rehab agreed to provide Matty with some on the job training in day care. They funded a job coach to do some assessments during these training sessions. She completed them successfully, but kept an open mind.

"They suggested some other types of jobs," Sally mentioned. One of these other jobs offered a position in dish washing at Pizza Hut. Although not what she had in mind, Matty considered her opportunities and decided to apply for the job.

Vocational Rehabilitation provided a good recommendation for Matty and soon the job was hers. Her mother was very grateful saying, "All of the women there worked so hard to find Matty a job." Matty has

"It's a good opportunity

for independence

and responsibility."

– Sally Winkelmann



Matty Winkelmann

been employed at Pizza Hut since the summer of 2003 and loves it.

Frankie Charles, one of Matty's counselors, is also complimentary. "Her mom was very active in the Voc Rehab process and Matty was very patient and cooperative," she said. Frankie was pleased that she was able to find a job she enjoys.

In addition to work, Matty is finishing up her high school education. She attends school in the evenings. It's hard work, but she enjoys it and it keeps her busy.

Matty has big ambitions for her future, and is still working hard toward her goals. She is extremely musical. In fact, she writes and sings her own music and plays the piano. She hopes to one day have her own C.D.

Her father helps her a lot in this area, but she credits both her parents with so much more and recognizes the big

part they have played in her success. "They're the ones that helped me," she remarked simply.

Her mother remembers Voc Rehab as one agency that was there for them. "I really didn't know what kinds of opportunities were there. I didn't know where to look," Sally said. "So Voc Rehab really opened a door for her."

The people that the Winkelmanns worked with at Vocational Rehabilitation were another big plus. Matty's mother remembered that, in addition to being helpful and friendly they were, "Very encouraging."

She and Matty both give a lot of credit to the program. Sally said, "It's a good opportunity for independence and responsibility." She is pleased that Matty is becoming more independent.

Matty's delightful outlook and a strong sense of determination assure her continued success in the workforce, but Vocational Rehabilitation is there to lend a hand if ever she needs it. She plans to continue to work at Pizza Hut, attend school, and in her off time, have a little fun. □